



# DEVELOPING YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO

## FACILITATOR GUIDE

### SESSION OVERVIEW

This 45-minute session will provide students with an **introduction** to the development of a portfolio that will ultimately document evidence of their strengths and experiences.

*Optimally, the delivery of this session follows a program of self-assessment and occupational research so that students' ideas are fresh and documentation is current. It may be valuable to have a sample portfolio to demonstrate for students. This session serves as an introduction to portfolios. Additional support and resources are available. Please contact your Career Development Facilitator provided by Central Alberta Career Prep.*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to define a portfolio and identify its benefits and applications.
2. Students will be able to identify and demonstrate their transferable skills through the use of a portfolio.
3. Students will collect and organize information and materials that reflect and show evidence of their unique skills.

### MATERIALS

Hand Out 1 – Why do a Portfolio?

Hand Out 2 – Suggestions for Organizing Your Portfolio

Hand Out 3 – Review Steps to Follow

Career Planner – Choosing an Occupation, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry



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## OVERVIEW AND TIMELINES

Introduction – What is a Portfolio?	5 Minutes
Why do a Portfolio?	5 Minutes
Who Am I?	10 Minutes
What to Include in Portfolio and Why?	20 Minutes
Wrap Up	5 Minutes

## ACTIVITIES

### INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

Present the following definitions

Port	--- to move
Folio	--- paper and artifacts

Discussion: A portfolio is an organized collection of items that represent the experience and assets a person has gathered throughout their career. It is important to clearly define the word career, as it is distinct from the words job and occupation. Ask students to provide examples as you discuss definitions.

**Job** A job is a specific position with a particular employer in which you are paid to complete specific duties. Examples include being a food server at McDonalds in Red Deer, being a science teacher at Central High School, or being Prime Minister of Canada.

**Occupation** An occupation is a general category of work where you may have several different jobs. You can adapt your skills to a variety of positions. Examples include being in customer service in the food industry, being an educator, or being in politics.

**Career** Your career is the sum total of your life experiences. It includes your paid and unpaid work, your family activities, your community and volunteer activities, your hobbies and leisure activities. Your career changes as you change roles in any of these areas.

What people “do for a living” and other aspects of their life are not separate; they are interconnected parts of one’s career.



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A person's career is "a journey, not a destination", and on this journey, they will continually be making decisions regarding work, lifestyle, and personal development. To make the best decisions regarding their career, people must be well informed about themselves and be able to gather information about their career options. Careers will include many roles and responsibilities.

Have students brainstorm roles they currently experience and what roles they plan to experience. Top up with the following:

Student	Community volunteer	Member of the church
Club or team member	Employee	Collector
Helper at home	Crafter	
Family member	Snowboarder	
Babysitter	Pet owner	
Dramatist	Musician	

A portfolio provides a record of life experiences that demonstrates who we are, what our plans are at present, and how our experiences have helped us to develop valuable transferable skills for the future. The documents we include in our portfolio will demonstrate the person we have become and the skills we have developed while "living" our career.

**A portfolio then becomes a collection of documents demonstrating WHO we are, WHERE we are going and WHAT we can do.**

The portfolio becomes a method of communication between the student and key people in a student's career including future employers and college officials. It is always a work in progress. New artifacts are added as new experiences take place, and old artifacts are removed if they become irrelevant or outdated.

A portfolio can take many formats, although the key concern is that it is portable. It may be a CD; it may be in a briefcase; it may be in a binder, but it must be manageable, organized and ready. This means that the students are familiar with their portfolios, that they know and can explain each article and discuss the evidence that it represents.

## WHY DO A PORTFOLIO?

Have students write down two achievements, accomplishments, or activities they have done in the last three years that they are proud of.



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Recruit a few responses and document on the board. Have students brainstorm what skills they developed through these accomplishments.

Have students write down two of their future goals. Discuss with the class how these future goals can be reached using the skills they already have demonstrated in their past achievements.

Distribute **Why do a Portfolio? Hand Out** and discuss each point with students.

## WHO AM I?

Most of the students will have some ideas now about the content of their portfolios. What comes next is the ability to recognize the skills that they represent. However, before they do this, the students must be able to identify their own skills and strengths.

Distribute the publication Career Planner – Choosing an Occupation, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry. Have students turn to page 23 and work through the skills, interests, values and traits assessments to page 32. Students can use these pages in their portfolios.

*(As time permits, students may continue through the “What types of occupations are out there for me?”)*

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PORTFOLIO AND WHY?

Have the students brainstorm a list of the types of artifacts they believe would best represent them in a portfolio.

When they have a fairly comprehensive list, distribute **Suggestions for Organizing Your Portfolio Hand Out**. Have the students use the handout to compare their choices. Remind students that this handout serves as a suggestion. Their creative input will make their portfolio a more authentic representation of their unique skills and abilities.

In order to ensure that each student’s portfolio accurately reflects their skills, students must review each item in their portfolio and assess its value.

One way to do this is to answer these questions about each artifact they have selected to include in their portfolio:



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- Does the item have a positive impact?
- What skills does this artifact demonstrate?
- What does it show about what I have learned?
- Can I edit my presentation of this piece?

Try this process with the group using the following scenario:

*Ryan is a member of the community minor hockey team. His team plays every Wednesday evening and Saturday morning, usually out of town. This is a challenge to his schoolwork, but he has managed to keep up quite well. Last year Ryan was chosen as Assistant Captain, which required him to provide support and leadership to the other members of his team. The team struggled through the first half of the season, but rallied in the second, finally ending in second place in the league. Ryan was disappointed his team did not win gold, but was proud of the progress he and the rest of the team had made, and felt it was a result of their growing teamwork skills.*

*Ryan has a picture of his team wearing their silver medals. Should he put this picture in his portfolio?*

## WRAP UP

Distribute **Review Steps to Follow in a Portfolio Hand Out**. Review with the students the steps involved in developing an outstanding portfolio.

Reinforce the point that it is critically important that students **KNOW** their portfolios. In order to be comfortable with them during an interview or a presentation, a student needs to rehearse (and rehearse, and rehearse).

*Note to Facilitators:* It is valuable to book a date for students to present portfolios to groups of teachers, administrators, parents, or local employers.

**\* Facilitators must be aware of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and its impact on portfolio development. While students are encouraged to use photographs demonstrating their skills, they must not present images of others without their written permission. For individuals under the age of 18, the written permission of a parent or guardian is necessary. Typically, team photographs and the like are permissible, as parents have acknowledged the potential for publication.**



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## APPENDIX

This introduction to portfolios assumes that other learning experiences have already occurred, or will occur, before students complete a portfolio for presentation. This appendix provides additional suggestions and resources for teachers / facilitators to assist students in developing portfolios.

### Skills / Interest Inventories

Workability Handbook, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry publication; this workbook is a free resource and provides a “diary” of skills.

Career Planner, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry publication; students may continue through the “What types of occupations are out there for me?” section through to page 47.

### Career Planning Activities

Portfolios should demonstrate that students have taken part in on-going, specific career planning activities such as:

- career planning interest inventories
- career research (job shadowing, informational interviews, career fairs)
- high school requirements and post-secondary options

The Career Cruising web site ([www.careercruising.com](http://www.careercruising.com)) (requires user name and password), provides an interest survey connected to occupational titles and information including job description, career path, post secondary requirements and options, as well as average earnings.

The ALIS web site ([alis.alberta.ca](http://alis.alberta.ca)) (does not require user name and password) is a Government of Alberta site that provides extensive information on Career, Employment and Education.

### Documenting Skills

Templates like the one **DOCUMENTING YOUR SKILLS WITH A JOB DESCRIPTION** may be developed for entries including:

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Best Work Samples       | - Teams / Clubs         |
| - Certificates and Awards | - Leadership Activities |
| - Volunteer Work          | - Project Work          |



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Use the following template to provide evidence of skills students have acquired through employment. If students have had a variety of work experiences, they should complete a job description for each.



## WHY DO A PORTFOLIO?

- DOING A **PORTFOLIO** IS AN EXERCISE IN SELF-EXAMINATION AND SELF-REALIZATION. REFLECTION ON YOUR VALUES, INTERESTS AND SKILLS LEADS YOU TO IDENTIFY SKILLS AND QUALITIES THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE.
- A **PORTFOLIO** ORGANIZES ALL OF THE EVIDENCE YOU HAVE COLLECTED OVER THE YEARS OF WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO.
- WHILE YOU ARE IN SCHOOL, A **PORTFOLIO** WILL PROVIDE A RECORD OF YOUR CAREER PLANNING ACTIVITIES INCLUDING SKILLS, VALUES AND INTEREST INVENTORIES, OCCUPATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS, AND POST-SECONDARY RESEARCH.
- YOUR **PORTFOLIO** PROVIDES PROOF OF COMPETENCY AND PREPAREDNESS TO EMPLOYERS. YOU WILL BE MORE CONFIDENT WHEN APPLYING FOR A JOB BECAUSE YOU HAVE ORGANIZED THE EVIDENCE OF YOUR SKILLS. EMPLOYERS MAY ALSO VIEW THIS EVIDENCE AND DISCUSS IT DURING AN INTERVIEW.
- APPLYING FOR POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS AND SCHOLARSHIPS WILL BE EASIER SINCE YOU HAVE A RECORD OF YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.





## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR PORTFOLIO**

All portfolios generally begin with a section that introduces who you are, your goals, your values, your interests, and your skills. In addition, a portfolio should be organized so that your academic / technical skills, personal management skills, and teamwork skills are obvious. Sometimes a document may fit in two or more sections. You make the decision about which skills are best illustrated by the document.

### **Section 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Documents that reflect “you” might be:

- Your mission statement
- Inventories of values, interests and skills
- A personal autobiography
- Your resume and cover letter
- Evidence of hobbies / musical skills / personal sports or activities
- Community involvement / volunteer work
- Pictures of places you have been

### **Section 2: ACADEMIC AND TECHNICAL SKILLS**

Examples of academic and technical skills:

- Communicating
- Managing information, including technical information
- Using numerical skills
- Using technology
- Being creative
- Being able to think and to solve problems

Documents that illustrate your academic and technical skills:

- Transcripts of your marks or your latest report card
- Certificates which demonstrate academic excellence
- Evidence of scholarships
- Certificates which prove competency: Standard First Aid, Driver's License
- Samples of your best writing
- Essays, poetry, songs, or drawings you have created
- An assignment or test you are proud of
- A lab write-up you have done a good job on
- Samples of your word processing skills
- Samples of your ability to use specific software programs
- Samples of charts or graphs / data base / spreadsheets
- Samples of bulletin boards / displays / projects you have developed either alone or with others
- Pictures of projects you have done in shop, in art, or other classes
- Pictures of a vehicle you have worked on
- Evidence of competency in other languages
- Notes from others recognizing your academic and technical skills



## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR PORTFOLIO CONTINUED**

### **Section 3: PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

Examples of personal management skills:

- Organizing
- Goal setting
- Planning
- Managing time and resources
- Taking responsibility
- Being flexible

Documents that illustrate personal management skills:

- Letters of reference
- Part time job descriptions and skills demonstrated
- Work Experience / RAP / Green Certificate job descriptions, activity logs and skills demonstrated
- Work Experience / RAP / Green Certificate evaluations
- 4-H or other club documentation
- A copy of a weekly / daily schedule
- Evidence of career planning activities
- Evidence of a plan for post-secondary education and future career choices
- Letters recognizing your skills
- Description of volunteer work
- Sample plans to illustrate how you carried out a responsibility
- Evidence of an event / project that you organized yourself or helped others to organize

### **Section 4: TEAMWORK / LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

Examples of teamwork / leadership skills:

- Working with others
- Cooperating to reach goals
- Respecting the views and opinions of others
- Advising / counseling
- Leading

Documents that illustrate teamwork skills:

- A description of an activity or project where you worked with others
- Documents which illustrate your membership / roles / achievements in a team or club
- Events / activities where you were in a leadership role (e.g. yearbook committees, graduation activities, field trips, concerts, fund raisers)
- Membership / achievements in a cultural organization
- Letters / certificates of appreciation indicating leadership / teamwork skills



## **REVIEW STEPS TO FOLLOW IN A PORTFOLIO**

### **Step 1: Reflect**

- Think about your roles, your activities, your dreams
- Think about your skills, values, interests
- Do some personal assessment inventories
- Do a mission / goal's statement

### **Step 2: Gather Evidence**

- Complete a checklist giving suggestions about what you might include in a portfolio
- Collect appropriate items from school, home, workplace, etc.
- Take pictures of projects, medals, you doing an activity, etc.
- Make copies of documents, keep originals in a safe place

### **Step 3: Organize**

- Organize your entries according to topics
- Make title pages for each section of your portfolio

### **Step 4: Develop Skills Statements**

- Write short interesting paragraphs at the beginning of each section to introduce the documents you have included and the transferable skills you have demonstrated
- Use a template to outline the content of each entry and to list specific skills demonstrated by each

### **Step 5: Prepare a Resume**

- Use the information discovered in your portfolio development to write a concise resume which indicates to prospective employers your strengths in character and skills

### **Step 6: Test and Revise**

- Continually add / subtract / revise your portfolio as your experiences change and as you develop new skills

### **Step 7: Present**

- Prepare to present your portfolio to others
- Choose those parts of your portfolio that best describe who you are and what you can do
- What you present depends on who you are presenting to: a prospective employer, a post-secondary program, a scholarship committee
- Rehearse your presentation so that you are able to confidently demonstrate your skills